

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 MCE-00 AID-05 EB-08 OMB-01 TRSE-00 DEAE-00
SNM-02 /072 W

-----068097 101113Z /10

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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3965

C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 2388

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: MASS, SNAR, BM

SUBJ: BURMESE REQUEST FOR RECOILLESS RIFLES

REF: RANGOON 2237

1. FOLLOWING IS THE TEXT OF A MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION BETWEEN
THE DEFENSE ATTACHE AND MOD DIRECTOR OF ARMOR AND ARTILLERY
COL. SEIN TUN.

2. BEGIN QUOTE:

AMONG OTHER TOPICS COLONEL SEIN TUN RAISED THE ISSUE OF THE BURMA
ARMY DESIRE TO PURCHASE OR TO PRODUCE 57MM RR WEAPONS AND AMMUNI-
TION. HE SAID HE WAS DISAPPOINTED, BUT NOT SURPRISED THAT THE
U.S. HAD NO 57MM RR AVAILABLE FOR SALE, AND HE "SUSPECTED"
(UNDERSTANDABLY) CO-PRODUCTION WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE. HE MADE
THE FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL POINTS:

A. A BELGIAN "SALES PROMOTER" HAS OFFERED TO SELL TO BURMA
200 U.S. MADE 57MM RR FITTED WITH NEW TUBES (COST \$700 PLUS EACH
-- AS BEST HE COULD REMEMBER) AND 35,000 ROUNDS OF AMMUNITION
(COST \$27.00 EACH). ALTHOUGH INTERESTED, HE IS CONCERNED
ABOUT THIS OFFER BECAUSE:

(1) BURMA DOES NOT DESIRE TO BECOME INVOLVED WITH
AN "INTERNATIONAL ARMS DEALER." HE SAID BURMA WOULD PREFER
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TO DEAL WITH A LEGITIMATE ARMS SOURCE AND IF NECESSARY "PAY
DOUBLE."

(2) WHILE TUBES MAY BE NEW AND POSSIBLY CAPABLE
OF WITHSTANDING THE WEAR AND TEAR OF ABOUT 2,000 ROUNDS
EACH HE IS CONCERNED THAT THE MILLED BREECHBLOCK MAY NOT BE
NEW -- AND THEY NEED REPLACEMENT AFTER ABOUT 500 ROUNDS.

(3) THE AVAILABILITY OF ADEQUATE SPARES SUPPORT

HAS YET TO BE ADDRESSED.

THE POSSIBILITY THAT THIS OFFER MAY BE ACCEPTABLE TO BURMA STILL EXISTS. COLONEL SEIN TUN IMPLIED THAT HE MAY ASK THE AMERICAN EMBASSY FOR SOME ASSISTANCE REGARDING THE LIGITIMACY OF THE BELGIAN SOURCE. HE SAID HE WOULD NEED ABOUT TEN DAYS MORE TO INVESTIGATE THE MATTER FURTHER AND THAT HE WOULD THEN GET IN TOUCH WITH ME. HE DID NOT MENTION THE NAME OF THE BELGIAN FIRM OR THE "PROMOTER."

B. BURMA IS INTERESTED IN OBTAINING MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE 90MM RR ESPECIALLY CONCERNING THE AVAILABILITY OF HIGH EXPLOSIVE (RATHER THAN ANTI-TANK) AMMUNITION. (I INFORMED HIM THAT A REQUEST FOR SUCH INFORMATION HAD BEEN FORWARDED TO WASHINGTON, D.C. BY THE EMBASSY AND THAT WE EXPECTED A RESPONSE SOON.)

C. COLONEL SEIN TUN MENTIONED BRIEFLY SOME ADDITIONAL WEAPONS BEING CONSIDERED BY THE BURMESE IN THEIR SEARCH FOR A MEDIUM RANGE DIRECT FIRE INFANTRY WEAPON. INCLUDED WERE:

(1) FRENCH SMOOTH BORE ROCKET LAUNCHERS SIMILAR TO U.S. 3.5 RL. RANGE INSUFFICIENT AND TOO EXPENSIVE (20,000 FRANCS EACH).

(2) ROCKET LAUNCHERS (COUNTRY OF ORIGIN NOT STATED) WITH ROCKET BGBST TO INCREASE RANGE. EVEN WITH INCREASED RANG IT IS INSUFFICIENT FOR BURMA ARMY. COLONEL SEIN TUN SEEMS TO HAVE BECOME MORE AWARE OF THE COMPLEXITIES AND COST OF LOCAL PRODUCTION, EVEN OF SPARES, THAN HE WAS AT OUR FIRST MEETING IN JUNE. FURTHER, HE IS CONFIDENTIAL

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CONSIDERING A WIDER RANGE OF WEAPONS, PROBABLY ATTEMPTING TO FIND A REASONABLE COMPROMISE THAT WILL SATISFY THE BURMA ARMY REQUIREMENT WITHIN LIMITS OF AVAILABLE FUNDS. HE TOLD ME HE WAS NOT IN FAVOR PERSONALLY OF THE 57MM RR, PREFERRING A WEAPON WITH A LONGER LIFE EXPECTANCY IN THE BURMESE WEAPONS ARSENAL (SPARES, AMMO, ETC.)

APPARENTLY A DECISION ON THE MATTER IS TO BE MADE IN THE NEAR FUTURE. HE SAID HE INTENDED TO ADDRESS THE OVERALL PROBLEM WITH MOD STAFF, POSSIBLY THIS WEEK, AND WOULD BE IN A POSITION TO DISCUSS THE STATUS THE FOLLOWING WEEK (ABOUT 17 AUGUST). A RESPONSE FROM US ON THE AVAILABILITY OF VARIOUS 90MM RR AMMUNITION SOMETIME THIS WEEK WOULD BE

HELPFUL, HE SAID.
END QUOTE.

3. WE WOULD APPRECIATE AN EARLY RESPONSE TO OUR REQUEST (PARA 4 REFTTEL FOR INFORMATION ON THE AVAILABILITY OF OTHER THAN ARMOR-PIERCING AMMUNITION FOR THE 90MM RECOILLESS RIFLE AND FOR THE APPROXIMATE UNIT COST OF WEAPONS AND AMMUNITION.
BARTLEY

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